William and Nathaniel Pope

17th century immigrants to America, theories of their sibling relationship to each other, and evidence to the contrary

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Abstract

In the science of genealogy, a single theory can spark a chain reaction of unfounded speculations that reverberate through generations of research. Such was the case when, in 1901, five simple words were published, igniting a wildfire of theories regarding a possible sibling relationship between two 17th century Virginia immigrants. What began as a modest hypothesis soon spiraled into a web of misinformation leading genealogists astray for more than a century. This essay delves into the origins of the theory suggesting a sibling relationship between William Pope, of Westmoreland and Nansemond, and Col. Nathaniel Pope, of Westmoreland, and explores the subsequent theories that have sprouted from it. Through a meticulous examination of the words and phrases used in the propagation of these theories, as well as an analysis of factual evidence from primary sources, it will be made evident that the supposed relationship between these two individuals is unfounded.

Keywords: Pope, genealogy, history

William and Nathaniel Pope

The genealogical puzzle surrounding William Pope of Westmoreland and Nansemond, and Col. Nathaniel Pope of Westmoreland, both immigrants from England who settled in 17th century Virginia, has intrigued researchers for more than a century. While quoting notes from Robert Alonzo Brock's *Memorandum Book*, genealogist Henry FitzGilbert Waters (1901, 403) speculated that these two men were "probably brothers." Waters' theory has since been echoed by notable genealogists Annie Noble Sims (1918, 57-64) and Lodowick Johnson Hill (1922, 230), though these genealogists credit the speculation to Brock due to their misreading of Waters' footnote. Despite the lack of concrete evidence linking the two men as brothers, the speculation continues to be discussed, analyzed, and propagated within some genealogical circles.

Waters' initial speculation laid the groundwork for subsequent genealogists to delve into the possibility of a sibling relationship between William and Nathaniel. Sims briefly mentioned the theory in 1918, citing a single and irrelevant matter of circumstance to support it. However, it was Hill who took a more aggressive approach in attempting to persuade readers of the potential relationship between the two men.

Hill presented circumstantial evidence and irrelevant details in an effort to strengthen Waters' theory, even though he admitted that no definitive proof had been found to establish a sibling relationship between William and Nathaniel. Hill's additions to Waters' theory further complicated matters. Despite acknowledging that there were no records directly linking William and Nathaniel as brothers, Hill continued to speculate about their supposed shared ancestry.

In presenting his evidence in support of a possible relationship between William and Nathaniel, Hill revealed a lack of thorough examination of the evidence at hand. Through his choice of language when presenting his findings, Hill inadvertently demonstrated his reliance on secondary sources rather than firsthand inspection. By citing Waters' theory as being Brock's work, he demonstrated that he did not verify the information independently. By questioning the accuracy of a land patent date without concrete evidence, by speculating on individuals' intentions without direct knowledge, and

by misstating the location of vital records, Hill cast a sincere shadow of doubt onto the validity of his conclusions.

After demonstrating that he did not personally examine the mentioned records, Hill then claimed that he did carefully examined the records, and that his careful examination of those records persuaded him to believe "that Nathaniel and William Pope were from the same English stirp, and that William, Richard, John and Thomas Pope were brothers, and probably the sons of Richard Pope, Sr., merchant and soap-maker, of Bristol in 1662." Afterwards, Hill ultimately admitted to finding no substantial evidence supporting his theory regarding William and Nathaniel's lineage from Richard.

While it is commendable that Hill acknowledged that no evidence had been found in support of his theory, the repercussions of his unfounded conclusion continue to reverberate within genealogical circles. Other researchers unknowingly perpetuate these inaccuracies by relying on Hill's work as a reputable source.

Historical records and the results of y-chromosome DNA testing of individuals who have successfully documented their lines of descent from William and Nathaniel Pope provide a definitive answer to the question of whether William and Nathaniel were brothers. A thorough examination of these records and y-chromosome DNA test results, as well as other primary sources, reveals that no sibling relationship existed between these two men, nor did one exist between William and Richard Pope, Sr., of Bristol.

Published Theories and Assertions

Lauded as being "the highest authority of Virginia antiquities, early history and family pedigrees," R. A. Brock served from 1875 to 1893 as Corresponding Secretary of the Virginia Historical Society, from 1879 to 1883 as Associate Editor of the *Richmond Standard*, and from 1887 to 1914 as Secretary of the Southern Historical Society. A business man, antiquarian, historian and genealogist, Brock was a member of seventy of the learned societies of the United States and Europe (Robert Alonzo Brock [biography] 1915).

Published theories as to a sibling relationship between William and Nathaniel Pope appear to have stemmed from Brock's *Memorandum Book*. However, the initial theory was

not posed by Brock. Instead, it originated with a footnote in Waters' *Genealogical Gleanings in England*, Vol. I (1901, 403).

Citing notes transmitted to him from Brock's *Memorandum Book*, Waters included the following as footnotes in his publication—

> Nathaniel Pope, Book No. 3, p. 279, 1000 acres on the south side of Potomac river in Westmoreland Co., Sept. 6, 1654.
> William Pope, Book No. 4, p. 31, 200 acres in Westmoreland Co., March 11, 1655.
> [These grantees were probably brothers]

Waters quoted Brock and, in the midst of doing so, he used square brackets to introduce his theory into the quote, that William Pope, of Westmoreland and Nansemond, and Nathaniel Pope, of Westmoreland, "were probably brothers." It is important to note the significance of the square brackets used by Waters around the last statement in the above-quoted text.

> "Square brackets, often just called brackets in American English, are a set of punctuation marks that are most often used to alter or add information to quoted material. Square brackets come in pairs as [and]. Square brackets resemble and are used similarly to parentheses, but these two punctuation marks are NOT used interchangeably (Thesaurus.com)."

The importance in noting the meaning of square brackets is because this technicality has been repeatedly overlooked by subsequent genealogists who refer to Waters when propagating and furthering his theory. This error in attribution, shown in the quotes which follow, demonstrate that the theory proposed by Waters has been consistently and erroneously attributed to Brock.

Seventeen years following the publication of Waters' *Genealogical Gleanings in England*, Sims cited Waters in her article, *Three Early Landowners of the County of Isle of Wight, Virginia: Jeremiah Exum, Michael MackQuinney, and William Pope, with notes on some of their descendants*, which was published in the *William and Mary College Quarterly* (1918, 57-64), writing—

> Mr. R. A. Brock suggests the probability that William Pope of Nansemond and Westmoreland counties, and Nathaniel Pope of Westmoreland county, were brothers. This suggestion is further borne out by the fact that at least one of the grandsons of Nathaniel Pope of Westmoreland county lived in Isle of Wight county, Virginia. This was Richard Pope, to whom his brother John Pope gave power of attorney, August 9th, 1690. Their exact relationship to William Pope is as yet undetermined.

In the above-quoted text, Sims restated the theory posed by Waters, yet she attributed the theory to Brock. Sims then sought to reinforce the theory by noting that Richard Pope, a grandson of Nathaniel Pope, lived in Isle of Wight around the year 1690. She also mentioned John Pope, another grandson of Nathaniel Pope and a brother of Richard Pope. By stating that "[t]heir exact relationship to William Pope is as yet undetermined," Sims implied that a relationship did, in fact, exist between William and Nathaniel Pope, though the nature of the relationship was not yet known.

Four years following Sims' article, Hill published his *Hills of Wilkes County, Georgia and allied families*, in which he wrote the following (1922, 230)—

> *William Pope* was probably the brother of Nathaniel Pope—mentioned, but not named by Nich[s] Heywood in letter Nov. 25, 1652. He certainly patented lands in Nansemond County in 1656, 1662 and 1665, and according to Mr. Brock, in Westmoreland Co. in 1655 [as before stated this is probably an error]. He, as was the intention of Nathaniel Pope, revisited England in the 1690s, and died in Nanzemond Co. very soon after returning home. Reference to this visit and his death appears in the Nansemond Co. records. One who personally examined this record gave me this information but did not give me the book and the page where found. William Pope is mentioned among the Friends at Nanzemond authorized by George Fox to establish regular Quarterly meetings there in 1673. (Quaker Records in Ms. in Safety Deposit at Baltimore).
>
> After carefully examining these early records, I am persuaded that Nathaniel and William Pope were from the same English stirp, and that William, Richard, John and Thomas Pope were brothers, and probably the sons of Richard Pope, Sr., merchant and soap-maker, of Bristol in 1662. Of course, this is a conjecture; no records discovered actually connect them. Among the descendants of Nathaniel and William

> we find in almost every generation and in every branch of their families, the family names of William, Henry, Thomas, Richard, and John.

Hill restated the theory posed by Waters and echoed by Sims, but did not cite his source for the initial theory. Using a long hyphen[1], Hill appended to Waters' theory the mention of several items in what appears to be an attempt at confirming the possibility of the theory. Each of those items will be addressed below, in the order that Hill presented them.

First, Hill mentioned a letter written by Nicholas Heywood in which a brother of Nathaniel Pope is supposedly mentioned, but also points out that the brother is not mentioned by name. Hill's use of the long hyphen, as well a the context of the sentence, implies that Hill was suggesting to his readers that William Pope was the unnamed brother of Nathaniel Pope mentioned by Nicholas Heywood. However, without express mention of William Pope in Heywood's letter, Hill's mention of this letter demonstrates nothing.

Next, Hill made mention of multiple land patents for William Pope in Nansemond, dated in 1656, 1662 and 1665. Hill also mentioned a land patent for William in Westmoreland, dated 1655, noting that the last mentioned patent was "according to Mr. Brock." Using square brackets instead of parenthesis, Hill insert his opinion that the year of the last patent, 1655, was "probably an error." The mention of these patents is relevant since it was while mentioning patents in a footnote that Waters proposed his theory, however, it bears noting that research has already determined that the land patents dated in 1655, 1656, and 1662, were all the same parcel of land (citation needed). As such, any suggestion of these patents as being separate parcels of land is erroneous.

Hill then attempted to draw parallels between William and Nathaniel, mentioning that Nathaniel had intended to revisit England, whereas William actually did revisit England in the 1690s, dying in "Nanzemond" shortly after his return. In regards to William's death, Hill cited Nansemond Co. records. Hill did not, however, indicate how he knew the intentions of Nathaniel when only Nathaniel could have known his own intentions.

[1] an "em dash."

Furthermore, Hill added information completely irrelevant to the probability of William and Nathaniel Pope being brothers, writing that "William Pope is mentioned among the Friends at Nanzemond authorized by George Fox to establish regular Quarterly meetings there in 1673."

In the next paragraph, Hill expressly claimed to have "carefully" examined the records which he mentioned, and that he was persuaded by those records "that Nathaniel and William Pope were from the same English stirp, and that William, Richard, John and Thomas Pope were brothers, and probably the sons of Richard Pope, Sr., merchant and soap-maker, of Bristol in 1662."

By stating that he believed William to be a brother of Richard, John and Thomas Pope, Hill's suggestion that William was the unnamed brother mentioned in Heywood's letter is further deteriorated. It boils down to simple logic – if Nathaniel and William were brothers, and if William, Richard, John and Thomas were brothers, then Heywood's mention of Nathaniel's brother could have just as easily been a reference to Richard, John, or Thomas.

The fact that Hill referenced Brock in regards to the 1655 patent, and the fact that he theorized against the accuracy of the date of the patent, demonstrates that he must not have personally examined this record. Additionally, the fact that he presumed the 1655, 1656, and 1662 patents to be separate parcels of land further demonstrates that he must not have examined any of these records, though he stated that he carefully examined them. In any case, the mere act of acquiring land could hardly have been considered persuasive to Hill's conclusion, unless William's land was adjoining land owned by Nathaniel Pope or they owned land in partnership with each other.

It is doubtful that Hill carefully examined the record referencing William's visit to England and death upon returning to Virginia, which he stated was in the Nansemond Co. records. Doubt is cast on this statement because the only record referencing such events was a manuscript associated with the marriage of William Pope to Mary Haile, which is actually kept by the Society of Friends in a safe deposit box in Baltimore.

If Hill carefully examined the letter written by George Fox, in 1673, that fact is completely irrelevant to the issue since that document contains no mention of any of the persons that Hill was persuaded to believe had sibling relationships with William Pope.

Finally, after stating his unfounded theory, Hill noted that "Among the descendants of Nathaniel and William we find in almost every generation and in every branch of their families, the family names of William, Henry, Thomas, Richard, and John." However, as of 1900, of all the given names of men in America, the U.S. Social Security Administration database ranks the popularity of the names mentioned by Hill, as follows: John no. 1; William ranked no. 2; Henry no. 10; Thomas no. 11; Richard no. 24 (Popular Baby Names [database online]). While this ranking was nearly 300 years after William and Nathaniel's arrival in Virginia, those names were, no doubt, probably as popular then as they are today. As such, Hill's onomastic approach to promoting the theory of a possible sibling relationship between William and Nathaniel is unfounded.

Col. Nathaniel Pope and Richard Pope, Sr., of Bristol

According to historical records bound and published by the Bristol Record Society, and by the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, there most certainly was a Richard Pope, Sr., merchant and soapmaker, living and working in 17th century Bristol, England. Richard was the son of Michael Pope, also a soapmaker of Bristol, and his first wife, Joane Tomlynson. Michael and Joane were married at St. Thomas, in Bristol, on July 3, 1603, and Joan was buried at the same place on January 17, 1607/08 (Hall 1944, facing p. 8).

The dates of Michael and Joan's marriage, and of Joan's death, establish the range of years in which Richard Pope, Sr., could have been born, being between 1603 and 1607/08. Richard's relationship to Michael, as his son, is established by Michael's will within which Richard is mentioned as his son (Will of Michael Pope, September 19, 1642).

According to *Proceedings Minutes and Enrolments of The Company of Soapmakers, 1562-1642* (Matthews 1940, 165), on "Munday the 28th of maii 1627" (Monday, the 28th of May, 1627), "Mr Mcell pope hafe his sone to prentes Cold Richard pope and hase payed for hies intorances . . . 0-2-6" (Mr. Michael Pope has his son to apprentice called Richard Pope

and has paid for his entrance . . . 0-2-6). This goes to demonstrate that the Richard Pope who was the son of Michael Pope was, indeed, the soapmaker of Bristol mentioned by Hill.

According to J. B. Burke (1977, 2869), Col. Nathaniel Pope was born in 1610. Hill (1922, 230) estimated his year of birth to have been about 1614. Considering that Richard Pope, merchant and soapmaker of Bristol, was born between 1603 and 1607/08, it is physiologically impossible for Richard "the soapmaker" Pope to have been Nathaniel's father.

There is, however, ample evidence to demonstrate that Nathaniel was the brother of Thomas Pope, and possibly also of a John Pope and a different Richard Pope. This part of Hill's theory is not contested. There is also ample evidence which associates Nathaniel and Thomas Pope with Bristol, England. However, the evidence gives strong opposition against Hill's theory of these Popes being the sons of Richard Pope, soapmaker of Bristol.

While the evidence proves that these men were not the sons of Richard Pope, soapmaker of Bristol, there is still the possibility that they may have been sons of another descendant of one Richard Pope, of Brislington. This Richard Pope, of Brislington, was the father of Michael Pope who, in turn, was the father of Richard Pope of Bristol. This theory will have to be researched further and any evidence collected in pursuit of this theory carefully scrutinized before drawing any substantive conclusions.

William Pope and Richard Pope, Sr., of Bristol

Genealogist, including Hill (1922, Chart no. 2), estimate that William Pope was born about 1634. This estimate appears plausible considering that William's eldest child, William Pope, Jr., was born in 1662.

Unlike with Nathaniel, the estimated year of William's birth makes it possible that he could have been a child of Richard. However, the Will of Michael Pope (1642), Richard's father, was written when William was about 8 years of age. In his will, Michael named his son Richard, as well as Richard's sons Richard, Jr., and Michael. There was, however, no mention of a William Pope anywhere in his will.

In addition to the above, no mention of a William Pope (c.1634 – c.1708) can be located in bound record publications for Bristol where the records were made during

William's life-span. The titles of the publications which were searched include the following—

Barrett, William. *History and Antiquities of the City of Bristol*. Bristol: William Pine, in Wine-Street, 1789.

Beaven, Alfred B. *Bristol Lists: Municipal and Miscellaneous*. Bristol: T. D. Taylor, Sons, and Hawkins, "Times and Mirror", 1899.

Blacker, Beaver H. *Gloucestershire Notes and Queries*. London: Wm. Kent & Co., 1884.

Bristol Charters, 1155-1373. Bristol Record Society's Publications, Vol. 1. Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1930.

Bristol Charters, 1378-1499. Bristol Record Society's Publications, Vol. 11. Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1946.

Bristol Charters, 1509-1899. Bristol Record Society's Publications, Vol. 12. Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1947.

Bristol Corporation of the Poor, 1696-1834. Bristol Record Society's Publications, Vol. 3. Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1932.

Bristol Miscellany. Bristol Record Society's Publications, Vol. 37. Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1985.

Calendar of the Bristol Apprentice Book, 1532-1565, Part 1, 1532-1542. Bristol Record Society's Publications, Vol. 14. Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1949.

Calendar of the Bristol Apprentice Book, 1532-1565, Part 3, 1552-1565. Bristol Record Society's Publications, Vol. 43. Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1992.

Chitty, Henry, and John Phillipot. *Visitation of the County of Gloucester, taken in the year 1623*. Edited by John MacLean and W. C. Heane. Publications of The Harleian Society, Vol. XXI. London: The Harleian Society, 1885.

Chubb, T. "*Descriptive Catalogue of the Printed Maps of Gloucestershire, 1577-1911, With Biographical Notes*." Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archæological Society for 1912, 1912.

Company of Soapmakers, 1562-1642. Bristol Record Society's Publications, Vol. 10. Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1940.

Deposition Books of Bristol, Vol. 1, 1643-1647. Bristol Record Society's Publications, Vol. 6. Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1935.

Deposition Books of Bristol, Vol. 2, 1650-1654. Bristol Record Society's Publications, Vol. 13. Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1948.

Diary of Sarah Fox nee Champion, Bristol, 1745-1802. Bristol Record Society's Publications, Vol. 55. Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 2003.

Diary of William Dyer: Bristol in 1762. Bristol Record Society's Publications, Vol. 64. Bristol: 4word, Ltd., 2012.

Fuller, Thomas. *Worthies of England*. 3 vols. London: Nuttall and Hodgson, 1840.

Great Red Book of Bristol, Introduction. Bristol Record Society's Publications, Vol. 2. Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1931.

Great Red Book of Bristol, Part 1. Bristol Record Society's Publications, Vol. 4. Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1933.

Great Red Book of Bristol, Part 2. Bristol Record Society's Publications, Vol. 8. Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1938.

Inhabitants of Bristol in 1696. Bristol Record Society's Publications, Vol. 25. Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1968.

Jones, Donald. *Bristol's Sugar Trade and Refining Industry*. Bristol: The Bristol Branch of The Historical Association, 1996.

Merchants and Merchandise in Seventeenth-Century Bristol. Bristol Record Society's Publications, Vol. 19. Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1955.

Minute Book of the Men's Meeting of the Society of Friends in Bristol, 1667-1686. Bristol Record Society's Publications, Vol. 26. Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1971.

Minute Book of the Men's Meeting of the Society of Friends in Bristol, 1686-1704. Bristol Record Society's Publications, Vol. 30. Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1977.

Overseas Trade of Bristol in the later Middle Ages. Bristol Record Society's Publications, Vol. 7. Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1937.

Phillimore, W. P. W., ed. *Marriages*. Phillimore's Parish Register Series, Vol. XVII (Gloucestershire Parish Registers, Vol. VI). London: Phillimore & Co., 1900.

Politics and the Port of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century. Bristol Record Society's Publications, Vol. 23. Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1963.

Pre-Reformation Records of All Saints' Church, Bristol, Part 3. Bristol Record Society's Publications, Vol. 56. Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 2004.

Records of Bristol Cathedral. Bristol Record Society's Publications, Vol. 59. Bristol: 4word, Ltd., 2007.

Records of Bristol Ships, 1800-1838. Bristol Record Society's Publications, Vol. 15. Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1950.

Staple Court Books of Bristol. Bristol Record Society's Publications, Vol. 5. Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1934.

Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archæological Society, Vol. 108. "Goldsmiths of Gloucestershire, 1500-1800." 1990: 135-169.

Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archæological Society, Vol. 11. "Lists of the Merchants' Hall, Bristol, 1732." 1887: 291-292.

Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archæological Society, Vol. 12. "Presidential Address." 1888: 220-234.

Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archæological Society, Vol. 28. "Index to the Heraldry in Bigland's History of Gloucestershire." 1905: 147-510.

Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archæological Society, Vol. 29. "Religious Houses of Bristol and their Dissolution." 1906: 81-126.

Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archæological Society, Vol. 31. "Smyths of Ashton Court." 1908: 244-260.

Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archæological Society, Vol. 60. "Shrewsbury (Talbot) Manuscripts: Gloucestershire References." 1938: 260-296.

Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archæological Society, Vol. 65. "Whitson Court Sugar House, Bristol, 1665-1824." 1944: 1-97.

Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archæological Society, Vol. 68. "Bristol's Second Sugar House." 1949: 110-164.

Tudor Wills Proved in Bristol, 1546-1603. Bristol Record Society's Publications, Vol. 44. Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1993.

Two Compotus Rolls of Saint Augustine's Abbey, Bristol, for 1491-2 and 1511-12. Bristol Record Society's Publications, Vol. 9. Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1938.

Absence of William from the above-named publications does not prove that he was never a part of Bristol prior to departing for the Americas. However, being coupled with the fact that he was not named in the will of Michael Pope does strengthen the argument that he was not a son of Richard Pope. The argument is further strengthened by the fact that, after William's initial arrival to Virginia, he returned to England no less than two times, but

his name appears nowhere in the *Minute Book of the Men's Meeting of the Society of Friends in Bristol, 1667-1686*, or the *Minute Book of the Men's Meeting of the Society of Friends in Bristol, 1686-1704*. This is an especially compelling argument against the theory that William was of Bristol since records do demonstrate that he was an active member of the Society of Friends.

William Pope and Col. Nathaniel Pope

The ultimate key to proving or disproving the theory of a sibling relationship having existed between William and Nathaniel Pope lies in the study of y-chromosomes, which are passed down exclusively from father to son. This genetic marker offers a unique opportunity to trace paternal lineage with precision and accuracy. By comparing the yDNA test results of male descendants who can accurately trace their ancestry to either William or Nathaniel Pope, where each parent-child relationship can be demonstrated through historical records, scientists and genealogists can definitively determine whether or not a sibling relationship existed between the two men.

Through meticulous analysis of yDNA data, researchers can establish a genetic link between individuals who share a common male ancestor. If William and Nathaniel Pope were indeed brothers or otherwise closely related, their male descendants would exhibit similar y-chromosome patterns. Conversely, if no such correlation is found among their descendants, it would indicate that there was no paternal relationship between William and Nathaniel.

This scientific approach offers a powerful tool for dispelling myths and misconceptions surrounding historical figures like William and Nathaniel Pope. While theories regarding these men abound in genealogical narratives, DNA evidence can provide an objective means of separating fact from fiction regarding their purported relationship. By leveraging modern technology and genetic testing methods, genealogists can finally uncover the truth behind this complex genealogical puzzle.

The author of this essay, Dr. Roy Dalton Pope, Jr., a genealogist who has actively studied and applied himself towards Pope genealogy for more than 20 years, has successfully traced his lineage back to William Pope, of 17th century Westmoreland and

Nansemond. Through meticulous research and the help of DNA testing, Dr. Pope has been able to confirm his direct descent from William Pope, as have other men who have also traced their lines of descent from either William or Col. Nathaniel Pope.

Many individuals who share a common surname often join yDNA study groups to further explore the possibilities of familial connections. At Family Tree DNA (FTDNA), these groups categorize test results based on the earliest paternal ancestor identified by each participant. In the case of the Popes, there are distinct categories for men who trace their lineages back to William Pope, and for those who trace them back to Col. Nathaniel Pope.

One of the key findings that emerged from the yDNA test results submitted to the study group was the conclusive evidence that William and Nathaniel Pope did not share any close familial ties with each other along their paternal lines. This discovery is significant in dispelling any assumptions or speculations about potential paternal connections between the two ancestral lines.

According to the yDNA test results at Family Tree DNA (FTDNA), male Pope descendants of William and Nathaniel Pope share the prehistoric I-M253 subclade. This indicates a common ancestor at some extremely ancient point in history, suggesting a shared ancient paternal lineage between these individuals. However, further analysis reveals a divergence in their lines of descent at the DF29 subclade, which is estimated to have occurred approximately 4,600 years ago according to Y-Full data (Y-Full: Subclade I-Z2893). This genetic split indicates that William and Nathaniel Pope could not have had the same father or any other close familial relationship along their paternal lines of ancestry.

For Pope family genealogists, the implications of this genetic finding are profound as they challenge traditional notions of family relationships and highlight the complex interplay between genetics and genealogy. While historical records and genealogists of the past may suggest theories as to close connections between individuals with shared surnames, yDNA testing can provide definitive evidence to either support or refute these claims. In the case of William and Nathaniel Pope, the genetic data unequivocally

demonstrates that their paternal lines diverged thousands of years ago, ruling out any and all theories of close relationship between them in their paternal lines.

Conclusion

Genealogical research is not without its challenges. In order to accurately reconstruct a family tree and uncover the stories of those who came before us, genealogists must rely on a combination of primary and secondary sources. While secondary sources can provide valuable insights and guide researchers towards new leads, it is crucial that genealogists approach them with caution and skepticism.

Primary source records, such as birth certificates, marriage licenses, census data, and wills, are essential for building a solid foundation in genealogical research. These documents provide firsthand information about individuals and their relationships, offering concrete evidence that can be used to verify facts and establish connections between generations. Without primary sources, genealogists would struggle to piece together accurate family histories.

On the other hand, secondary sources like published genealogies can be helpful in providing context and pointing researchers towards additional resources. However, it is important to remember that these secondary sources are not infallible. Authors of genealogies may have biases or agendas that influence the way they interpret data or construct narratives. As such, genealogists should approach these secondary sources with a critical eye and be wary of accepting information at face value.

One common pitfall in relying too heavily on secondary sources is the perpetuation of false narratives and inaccuracies. If genealogists blindly accept the findings of previous researchers instead of verifying the information themselves, they run the risk of perpetuating errors or misconceptions in their own work. This can lead to a distorted view of one's family history and detract from the pursuit of truth.

To avoid falling into this trap, genealogists must take responsibility for verifying information found in secondary sources by consulting primary documents whenever possible. By personally examining records referenced in published genealogies and cross-

referencing information from multiple sources, researchers can ensure the accuracy of their findings and uncover new insights into their ancestry.

As with any historical inquiry, it is essential to approach genealogical research with a critical eye and a commitment to accuracy. In the case of the theories proposed by Waters, Sims, and Hill regarding a potential sibling relationship between William and Nathaniel Pope, it becomes evident through thorough examination that these claims are without merit.

The theories put forth by Waters, Sims, and Hill suggest a sibling relationship between William and Nathaniel Pope based on limited evidence and circumstantial factors. While some may find these claims intriguing or compelling on the surface, a deeper analysis reveals significant flaws in their arguments. By critically evaluating the claims made by these theorists and comparing them against primary sources and yDNA test results, it becomes clear that there is no substantial basis for asserting a paternal relationship between William and Nathaniel Pope.

One of the key issues with the theories proposed by Waters, Sims, and Hill is their reliance on incomplete or inaccurate information. Many genealogists today continue to perpetuate these erroneous narratives by simply echoing previously published genealogies without conducting their own research or verifying the facts. This practice not only hinders progress in genealogical studies but also leads to the dissemination of misinformation that can confuse future generations.

By contrast, conducting genuine research in genealogy involves careful examination of primary sources, cross-referencing information from multiple reliable references, and utilizing scientific tools like yDNA testing to confirm relationships. In the case of William and Nathaniel Pope, a thorough investigation using these methods has effectively disproven the theories proposed by Waters, Sims, and Hill.

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